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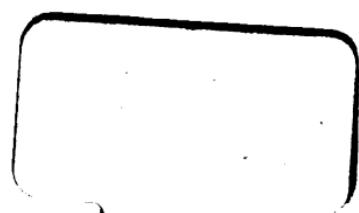
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The Gates of Silence

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ROBERT LOVEMAN

1970-1971



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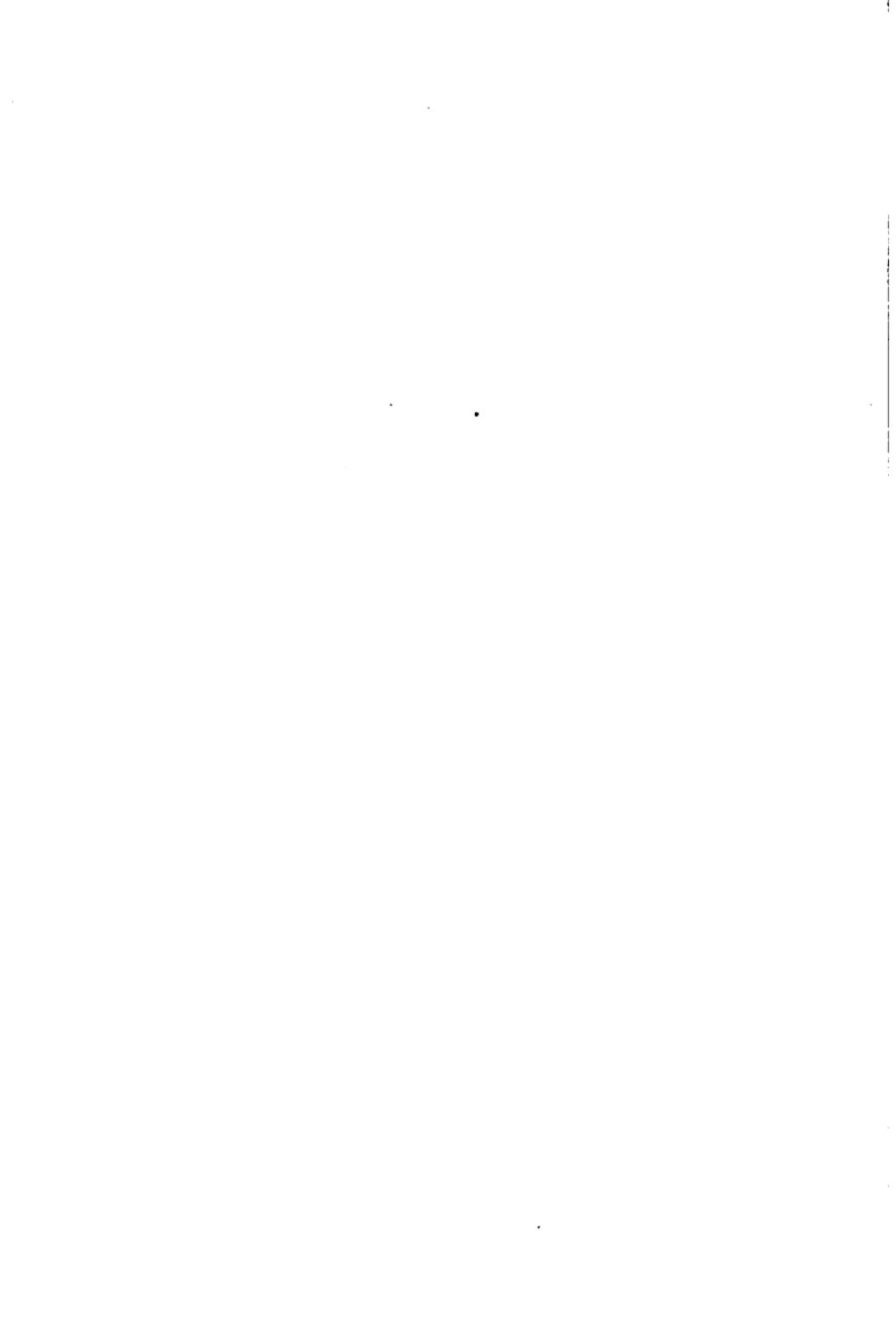
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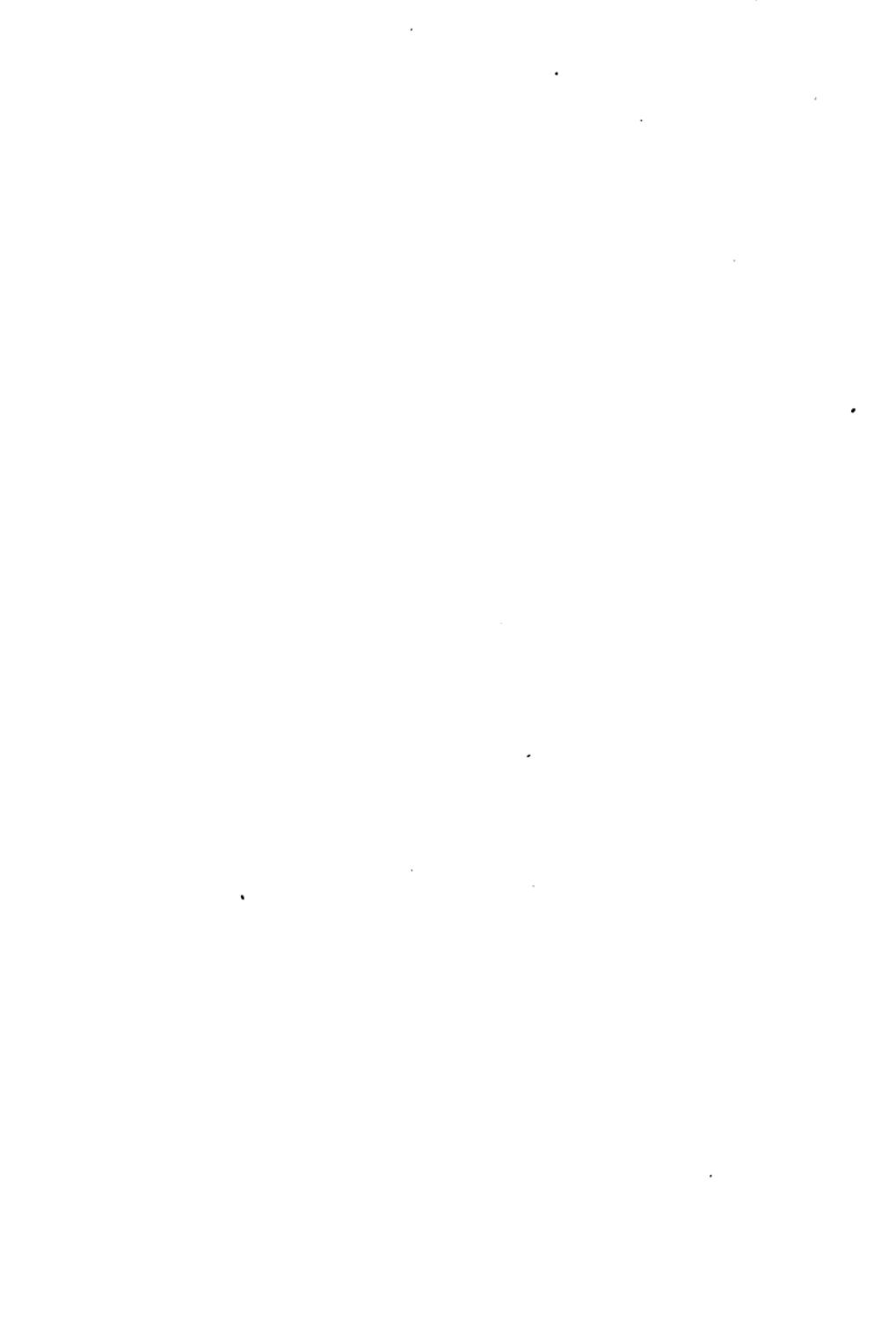
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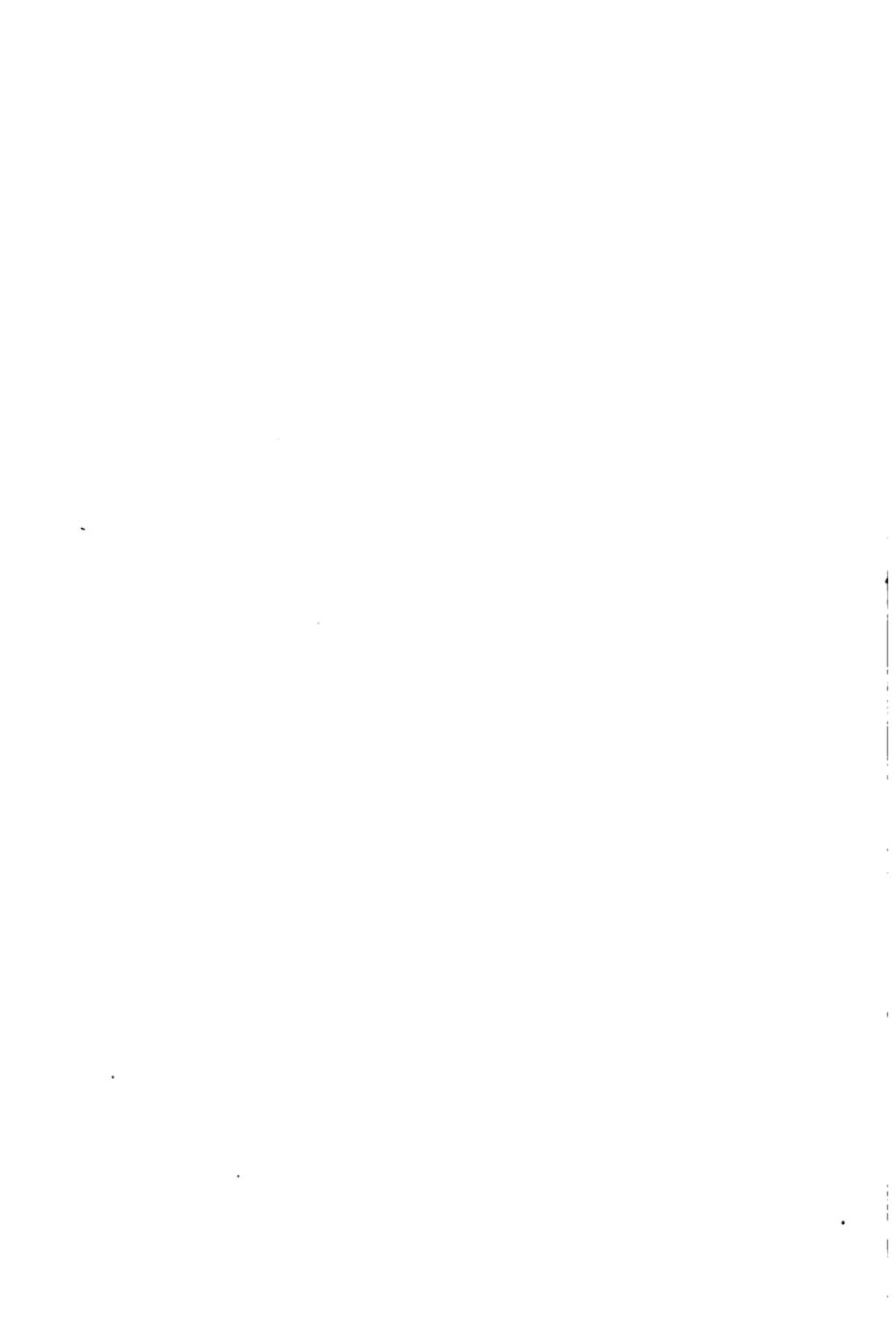
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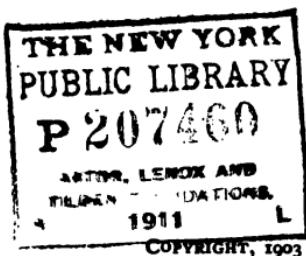
The Gates of Silence with Interludes of Song

By
Robert Loveman

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1903





BY
ROBERT LOVEMAN

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

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R. L.

DALTON, GEORGIA.

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I

THE races rise and fall,
The nations come and go,
Time tenderly doth cover all
With violets and snow.

The mortal tide moves on
To some immortal shore,
Past purple peaks of dusk and dawn,
Into the evermore.

II

I COULD not see till I was blind,
Then color, music, light,
Came floating down on every wind
And noonday was at night.

I could not feel till I was dead;
Then through the mold and wet
A rose breathed softly overhead,
I heard a violet.

III

One by one, the gods we know
Weary of our trust,
One by one the prophets go
Dreaming to the dust.

All the cobweb creeds of men
Vanish into air,
Leaving nothing, save a "When?"
Nothing, save a "Where?"

IV

FROM the dim starry track
Never a man comes back;
Of future weal or woe
Never a man doth know.

Nor you, nor I, nor he,
Can solve the mystery;
Come, let us boldly press
On to the fathomless.

V

ALL the tomes of all the tribes,
All the songs of all the scribes,
All that priest and prophet say,
What is it? and what are they?

Fancies futile, feeble, vain,
Idle dream-drift of the brain,—
As of old the mystery
Doth encompass you and me.

SONG

It is n't raining rain to me,
It 's raining daffodils;
In every dimpled drop I see
Wild flowers on the hills;
The clouds of gray engulf the day,
And overwhelm the town;
It is n't raining rain to me,
It 's raining roses down.

It is n't raining rain to me,
But fields of clover bloom,
Where every buccaneering bee
May find a bed and room;
A health unto the happy!
A fig for him who frets!—
It is n't raining rain to me,
It 's raining violets.

VI

OLD and yet young, the jocund Earth
Doth speed among the spheres,
Her children of imperial birth
Are all the golden years.

The happy orb sweeps on,
Led by some vague unrest,
Some mystic hint of joys unborn
Springing within her breast.

VII

WHAT if I wake in the dark,
After the last long sleep?
What if no friendly spark
Vigil about me keep?

What if the alien shores
Baffle my blinded barque,
And lost on some wild Azores,—
What if I wake in the dark?

VIII

So much I love God's sky,
And all He giveth me,
That when I come to die,
I feel how it will be.

My swift soul as it flies
In triumph singing on,
Will pass still lakes of Moonrise,
And wild cataracts of Dawn.

IX

Poor rambling, shambling soul of mine,
 Beyond the night, beyond the day,
When thou dost unto death resign
 This happy habitat of clay,

In high conclave, at feasts divine,
 Will legions leap to heed thy nod?
Or, doomed to darkness, wilt thou whine,
 A beggar at the gates of God?

X

WHAT of the men of Mars,
And maids of Mercury?
What of the loves and wars
These swirling systems see?

How do the Moon-folk fare?
What ships ply Saturn's seas?
And what brave races rare
Throng the proud Pleiades?

SONG

THE Dawn is a wild, fair woman,
With sunrise in her hair;
Look where she stands, with pleading hands,
To lure me there.

The Dusk is dark and glorious,
A star upon her brow;
With sunset blushes in her cheeks,
She beckons now.

I, ever fickle, stand between,
Upon my lips a rune,
And in my summer-singing soul—
The hoiden happy Noon.

XI

I WANT no trickster God,—
 No cunning, crafty spook—
Who smites a people, or a rock,
 Or one who writes a book.

For me a God who flings
 Out of His spendthrift hands
The whirling worlds like pebbles,
 The meshèd stars like sands.

XII

I SOUGHT the sun,—he struggled on;
The moon made no reply,
I questioned every nomad star
Upon the desert sky.

But never syllable or sign
To my impatient breath,—
Give me the plummet, Pilot;
I will sound the deeps of death.

XIII

I KNOW not what it is,
I know not where nor how,
But, while the pallid kiss
Of Death is on my brow,

My dauntless soul will leap
In eager quest to find
Where God doth love and keep
His flocks of humankind.

XIV

WHERE are the legioned dead
Of all the pallid past?
Out of the flesh they sped,
On to the unknown vast.

Tented upon the air?
By valiant spirits led?
How and when,—and where,—
Where are the legioned dead?

XV

THE Earth 's a burly animal
With fearless man astride;
Down the rugged gulfs of time,
He doth boldly ride.

The Earth 's a burly animal,
Bellowing through space,
Bearing upon his shaggy back—
And where—man's royal race?

SONG

HERE are roses for a rose,
Fragrance for the fair,
For thy soft noontide bosom
And thy twilight hair.

Let each pleading petal tell
All my passion's woe;
Crush my crimson couriers
To thy heart of snow.

Crush them with thy sweet kisses
Down to drowsy death,
Make their pure souls immortal
With thy holy breath.

XVI

WHEN Fate hath dealt his mortal thrust,
And love and life are gone,
The body will dissolve to dust,—
The gaunt soul stagger on

Across vast continents of space,
And shoreless seas of air,
Seeking its new appointed place,
Again to do, to dare.

XVII

THE body is the barque
That bears the soul away,
Down to the docks of dark,
Down to the harbor gray.

Then suddenly alone,
The spirit leaps afar,
On, on, from zone to zone,
On, on, from star to star.

XVIII

WHAT new visions shall we see
With immortal eyes?
What vast pageants will there be
Passing in the skies?

What new melodies shall greet
Our immortal ears,
When we reach the far retreat
O'er the bridge of years?

XIX

THE earth doth bravely swing about
The hills and vales of space,
In God's sweet coronal of worlds,
It keeps its joyous place.

Flung from the hand Omnipotent,
Until old Time be gray
The vaulted Night will hoard her stars,
The Sun will drink the day.

XX

WHAT shall be when we are free
Of all earthen care?
What do our pale brethren see
In the otherwhere?

Is it noon, or is it night,
T' other side o' death?
Pilot! is a land of light
Just beyond our breath?

SONG

BACK to the siren South,
Each mad red rose aglow,
To the vintage of her mouth,
Where purple kisses grow.

Back to her Orient eyes,
Her bosom's buds ablow;
Languorous land of ardent skies,
What should the cold North know?

XXI

It is a daring flight
That doth await the soul,
Across an unknown night
Unto an unknown goal.

Beyond the gates of space,
Away, and yet away,
To find the ordained place,
Upon the destined day.

XXII

WHAT is it, where is it,—how is it
After the day is done?
What goal and fate for love and hate,
Beyond the lusty sun?

How is it, where is it,—what is it,
Nirvana, heaven, hell?
Shakespeare, Omar, Solomon,
Will not God let you tell?

XXIII

My mind is fast made up,—
If God doth thwart me here,
I 'll seek on somewhere east of Mars,
Or west of Jupiter.

I will not be denied,
My eager soul must know
And find my brethren who have died
Through all the long ago.

XXIV

THE hills about my village throng
With steadfast friends of mine;
They stand up brave, and tall, and strong,
Sir Oak, Sir Elm, Sir Pine.

Subjects of sun, and wind, and sky,
They wait, they wave, they pray.
Alas, alas! that you and I
Cannot be calm as they!

XXV

It is not fair that God should keep
The secret to His breast,
And drift us down to dreamless sleep,
The mystery unguessed.

No voice from out the silence calls,
No finger points the way,—
Blind beggars shut between the walls,—
The walls of night and day.

SONG

FOLLY, we, alas! have been
Jocund, oft and time again;
Modest Virtue now shall be
Fair handmaiden unto me.

In thy loving eyes the tears
Hallowed half the wastrel years;
Ocean odors in thy hair,
Lips that led to Passion's lair.

Farewell, Folly, let us part,
Bind the old wounds in the heart;
Gentle Virtue now shall be
Sweet handmaiden unto me.

XXVI

LIFE, thou art so beautiful,
Cheek and eyes and hair,
God doth seem to think and dream,
How to make thee fair.

And thy swarthy sister,
With her hooded brow
And her muffled lips of lead;—
What, O Death, art thou?

XXVII

Out beyond the bourn of things,
Where each star a censer swings,
Infant orbs are taking flight
From the teeming womb of Night.

And o'er vasty voids of space,
Reeling on from place to place,
Worn and wrinkled, gaunt and gray,
Worlds are tott'ring to decay.

XXVIII

Who hath known, and who hath seen,
And who can testify?
What bold adventurer hath been
To star-lands in the sky?

Books there be, for you and me,
Maps of the charted “Whence;”
Alas, my sceptic soul must see
Some better evidence.

XXIX

I WENT in search of Beauty,
Up and down, and far and wide
And streaming, beaming, gleaming
She was ever at my side.

I went in search of Beauty,
Over meadow, over mart,
And leaping, creeping, weeping,
She was ever in my heart.

XXX

MORN leaps in mailed gold,
And cries, "Lo, I am Youth,
O daring deed, and bold,
I covet honor, truth."

Night clasps her patient stars
Close to her loving breast,
And, proud of life's brave scars,
Says softly, "I must rest."

SONG

I HUMBLY thank the gods benign,
For all the blessings that are mine.

My books, my garden, and my dog,
For mountain, meadow, fen, and bog.

The morning drips her dew for me,
Noon spreads an opal canopy.

Home-bound, the drifting cloud-crafts rest
Where sunset ambers all the west;

Soft o'er the poppy-fields of sleep
The drowsy winds of dreamland creep.

What idle things are wealth and fame
Beside the treasures one could name!

I humbly thank the gods benign
For all the blessings that are mine.

XXXI

We are captives close confined
To this cockle-shell of clay;
Let us horse the champing wind,
Let us stride to worlds away.

Let us sail the seas of space,
To celestial shores afar,
And go voyaging apace,
On from peopled star to star.

XXXII

WHY is my wretched body old?

My heart is young and free;
My soul, undaunted, wild, and bold,
Doth leap in ecstasy.

Yet Time doth clutch me at the throat,
And wields his potent sway,
Dumb Charon waiteth by the boat,—
We must away, away.

XXXIII

O **FOR** the centuries to be,
Of beauty and simplicity,
When wisdom, truth, and love shall reign,
And science slay disease and pain.

When all the nations shall be blent
Into one loving parliament,
When wars are done, and earth shall be
One peaceful, happy family.

XXXIV

AFTER a million years
Have stored their wealth away,
What will our finer kinsmen think
Of us who live to-day?

Will some say, “ ‘T is a jest;
They had not souls at all”?
And others, “ Never say that we
Sprang from such animal”?

XXXV

WHAT of the instant when
The soul fares forth the clay?
What mighty moment then
Of rapture or dismay?

What have the gods in store,
What vast, auspicious scheme,
Behind death's darkened door,—
Beyond our wildest dream?

SONG

Love distilleth in thine eyes,
Such a draught divine,
That I am not overwise,
Draining down the wine.

For with reeling soul afire,
Staggering 'mong men,
I am frenzied with desire—
But to drink again.

XXXVI

THAT old red fear comes over me,
The stealthy, haunting dread,
That when the sod doth cover me
My soul, too, shall be dead.

Why think the soul survive its clay,
Even an instant's span?
What beacon holds aloft a ray,
Presumptuous, proud man?

XXXVII

WHAT star-shod paths lead up to God
We may not know, we may not see;
The highways that the dead have trod
Are curtained close with mystery.

But if this goodly earth and fair
Be token of infinite grace,
Ah, who can dream the glories rare
In store for man's immortal race!

XXXVIII

WHEN death should smooth my furrowed face
And still my breathèd woes,
I thought to come unto that place
Of rapture and repose.

At last my free soul outward sped
Unto the destined sphere;
“We wonder,” there the spirits said,
“Where we shall go from here.”

XXXIX

NOTWITHSTANDING all that 's writ,
Nothing, nothing, do we know,
Mystery doth compass it
Till the soul doth further go.

All the guesses idle are,
All the prophecies are vain;
Death may solve the riddle rare,—
This is but a guess again.

XL

I WAKED from out the drowse of death
That held my spirit fast;—
“Sleep on,” a soft voice said, and yet
A billion years had passed.

The tireless æons onward sped
Until a golden chime
Rang from the dark; the voice then said,
“Rouse thee, 't is now thy time.”

XLI

IN vain, in vain,—we may not know
God's secret wise and true,
Down to the doors of death we go
And pass the portals through.

What silly heavens in the skies
The prating prophets plan!
Some unimagined, vast surprise
Shall greet the soul of man!

XLII

O MYSTERY of mysteries,
O secret vast and rare,
We stretch blind hands unto the skies,
We fathom everywhere.

From the dumb silence comes no sound,
No syllable we hear,
And man must venture outward bound,
A chartless voyager.

XLIII

WHY one poor heaven?—there may be
A thousand after this;
The soul, from fleshly fetters free,
May climb from bliss to bliss.

From high and then to higher still,
And nobler battles won,
Guided by God's omniscient will,
Go on, and on, and on.

XLIV

Who is Infinity—

Who governeth all things—
How sweet to Him must be
Our simple offerings!

The incense of our deeds,
The fragrance of our faith,
While on the chariot speeds—
To destination Death.

XLV

AFTER the day, the night,
After the month, the year,—
Naught will survive the dark and light
Save Pity's melting tear.

After the life, the death,—
How swift the moments speed!
Naught will survive our fleeting breath
Save kindly word and deed.

SONG

COME to my ears, come to my heart,
 Laugh from my lips, O Song,
Cry to me, sigh to me, hie to me, fly to me,
 Sing in my soul, O Song;
Below is the wave, and above is the sky,
 Croon to me, swoon to me, Song;
Creep to me, weep to me, laggard, O leap to me,—
 Let us away from wrong.

Stay with me, pray with me, Song, O away with
 me,
Far let us venture afar,
Over the deep to a still harbor bar,
 'Neath some sweet, penitent star;
O tender haze of the heart's happy days,
 O the fond fancies that throng!
A truce unto care and the isles of despair,
 Haste to my heart, O Song!

XLVI

ALL else of Man is dead, and I
Stand lone upon the sphere;
The pale earth shivers, sigh on sigh,
And shakes with frenzied fear.

Some Titan tears the world apart,
And sets the seas to rout,
And I, a silence at my heart,
See the cold sun fade out.

XLVII

ANOTHER day comes up the east,
And totters down the west;
Another night will rock to sleep
The stars upon her breast.

Year in, year out, they file along,
Sans intermission thus,—
I sometimes think the program is
A bit monotonous.

XLVIII

OVER the sea we go,—
Over the sea of life,
Past reefs of want and woe,
Through blinding fogs of strife.

O happy sea and wind,—
Soon, soon, we will forget
The islands far behind,
Those islands of regret.

XLIX

I WEEP so often now,
It may be death is near;
A calm is on my brow,
A song within mine ear.

I weep so often now—
Come, faith and love and trust,
And teach me humbly how
The valiant go to dust.

L

I do not grieve my soul
Concerning what will be
While Time's broad billows roll
On to Eternity.

I know the dawns of days
That drink the darkness there
Will blossom into gorgeous Noons,
Up-piled everywhere.

SONG

WHAT care I for caste or creed?
It is the deed, it is the deed;
What for class or what for clan?
It is the man, it is the man;
Heirs of love, and joy, and woe,
Who is high, and who is low?
Mountain, valley, sky, and sea,
Are for all humanity.

What care I for robe or stole?
It is the soul, it is the soul;
What for crown, or what for crest?
It is the heart within the breast;
It is the faith, it is the hope,
It is the struggle up the slope,
It is the brain and eye to see,
One God, and one humanity.

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